

And what talk it is! He pretends to be quite artless. He even affects a certain contempt for scribbling. It is perhaps partly due to a foible not unknown among eminent writers—such as Meredith, Hugo, Proust, perhaps even Shakespeare—snobbery. For this candid Montaigne, while poking great fun at people who preen themselves about their pedigrees, is distinctly disingenuous in suggesting that his own ancestors had held their lands for centuries instead of trading, as his grandfather and great-grandfather did, in dried fish and wine at Bordeaux. In the same way he speaks rather disdainfully of correcting and revising; though we still have elaborate corrections and revisions in his own hand. He knows nothing, he says, of orthography; yet he left minute instructions about it to his printer. He knows nothing of punctuation; yet death finds him still altering his own—notably commas—into full stops. He pretends that he is irritated by praise of his style; let us take leave not to believe him. It is rather the attitude of Congreve; or of Heredia—*Ecrire, ce n'est pas mon metier, c'est une de mes elegances/ This sage, this mocker so akin to Moliere, is at moments not without traces of Le Bourgeois GentiUiommc.

Certainly he owes a great deal of his effect to this same despised gift of style; 'sa vraie baguette d'enchantement', as Sainte-Beuve has called it. There is no better example

of its qualities than his own description of the
 style he likes
 in others: 'Le parler que i'ayme, c'est un
 parler simple et
 naif, tel sur le papier qu'a la bouche; un
 parler succulent et
 nerveux, court et serre; non tant delicat et
 peignd, comma
 vehement et brusque . . . * non
 pedantcsque, non fra-
 tesque, non plaideresque, mais plutost
 soldatesquc/ And
 again: Tayme Failure poetique, i saults et a
 gambades/
 Nine English readers out of ten read him in
 Florio or
 Cotton; vivid and excellent translators as
 they are (though